

# They're hitting a high note



Trumpet player Ken Kawamoto plays during one of the marching band drills on Wednesday. Kawamoto is one of about 120 Whippany Park students who are participating in the band this year.

## Whippany marching unit drilling for a new season

BY NAVID IQBAL  
DAILY RECORD

**HANOVER** — Between band practice from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and marching drill from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Jimmy Wang had a total 12 hours to himself this week. The rest of the time he spent with 120 other Whippany Park students, who also gave up their precious summer vacations to practice with the "Marching Wildcats," the high school band.

Students smiled, stretched their legs and looked like they were taking things easy on Wednesday night. That was until band directors Carol Sabatino or Peter Sciaino ordered their charges through speakers. The students immediately straightened their backs and moved in measured steps during an evening drill. To the side, the all-girl color guard twirled flags high in the air. They huddled after their practice before they

joined the rest of band in the drill. A hired choreographer, Israel Delgado, had written the drill pages, which are the formations the band will take during their performances during the year. Each band member is expected to memorize the 36 pages of the drill book. Each member who carried an instrument had a drill book and spot book hanging around their necks.

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### MARCH ON!

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DAWN BENKO / DAILY RECORD

The Whippany Park High School marching band runs through marching drills at a practice on Wednesday. A hired choreographer, Israel Delgado, created the formations the band will take during their performances the rest of the year. Band members are expected to memorize the 36-page drill book.

## Band

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"It's just fun," Wang, a 15-year-old sophomore with long black hair, said just before Sabatino commanded the woodwind line to assemble in formation.

Hundreds of students at other Morris County schools also practiced with their high school marching bands this week.

But with approximately 615 students expected to walk through the doors when school starts Sept. 8, Whippany Park High School's marching band represents almost 20 percent of the student body.

### Significant number

That's a remarkable figure, Principal John Manning said. "It's a very significant number of students involved in one particular area," he said. Band parents, a devoted crew in their own right, said the band is a better representation of Whippany's student body than what some might perceive based on the students arrested during last month's Operation Painkiller.

When the Morris County Prosecutors Office arrested nearly 60 area former and current Whippany Park students for charges related to prescrip-

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tion drug abuse, it obviously presented a negative image for the high school.

"It's bad publicity. What parent wants their children's school to be implicated in something like this?" Tony Bentrovato, the father of two band members, said Wednesday. "On the other hand, it is completely offset by 120 Marching Wildcats."

Whippany's marching band is unusual compared with other schools. The band's "pit percussion" is all electronic. The pit also has two guitarists. Other high school bands use other percussion instruments, such as conga drums. Not only does a large percentage of the general student body play in the band, but this band doesn't have auditions.

"Anybody that signs up,

were going to find a spot for them," Sabatino said Thursday.

The band competes with other so-called Group 4 school bands of comparable size throughout the year. Most of the bands their size, with 120 members, come from much larger schools, Sabatino said.

### The band played on

On Thursday, band members stood with their instruments on the entire stage, and end-to-end near the front row as they practiced some of their pieces. The music flowed even more fluidly than it did earlier this week. The "Dr. Beat" metronome kept pace with a loud, persistent bleep that could be heard from the parking lot.

The band wasn't hard to find either, as it filled the afternoon with music between Sciaino's instructions.

Whippany's band performs during football games — the Wildcats' home-opener is Sept. 8 — but also will perform in concerts throughout the year, Sabatino said.

This year's theme is "Simple Things First," named after the four jazz selections the band will perform.

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